



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 5, Issue 5

April 2015

2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) Launches the First Week in May

The Office of Personnel Management will send the 2015 FEVS to a randomly selected sample of full and part-time permanent employees beginning the first week of May. If you receive the survey, please complete it to help us gauge our progress and continue to drive improvements at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA.)

Using Viewpoints as a Pathway to Success: How FSA Leaders are Making the FEVS Results Work

By Ezekiel Dennison, FSA

Recently, the Management Services Division (MSD) leadership team of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in charge of employee engagement met for the first time to chart the course that MSD would follow to enhance its position as an inclusive, high-performance organization.

During the meeting, the team (pictured below) attended a workforce engagement briefing presented by FSA's Human Resources Division. Through a discussion using the data gathered by the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), the team was able to gain valuable insights into the perceptions of how MSD personnel view their work environment. They established a plan of action to assist on improving the areas where the results indicated an opportunity to better meet the work life needs of MSD personnel. They also discussed employee engagement and identified ways to increase and encourage employee feedback.

By incorporating USDA's Cultural Transformation goals and FSA Strategic Plan goals, the team is determined to help transform and modernize FSA. The team determined that through increased workforce engagement MSD will have a more motivated and empowered staff that will be better prepared to meet the varied needs of the customers they support.



You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](http://www.usda.gov/culturaltransformation).

Taking Action with the 2-2-2 Plan

By Febe Ortiz, NRCS

A couple of years ago, the Natural Resources Conservation Service initiated a 2-2-2 Planning action. It was a great success and will be implemented again in October 2015. The basic concept is for leadership to implement and report on the results of two measurable actions in each of the time frames: two in 30 days, two in 90 days, and two in 150 days that would improve employee engagement.

Based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results, Leadership, Communication, and Rewards and Recognition were the three overarching themes and areas of focus. States and NHQ leaders were asked to identify actions/activities in these areas that would move the agency forward toward enhancing and improving employee engagement.

The overview of action/activities -

30-Day Activities - 153 activities:

- 70 activities - Leadership
- 62 activities - Communication
- 21 activities - Rewards & Recognition

90-Day Activities - 135 activities:

- 69 activities - Leadership
- 44 activities - Communication
- 22 activities - Rewards & Recognition

150-Day Activities - 124 activities:

- 71 activities - Leadership
- 36 activities - Communication
- 17 activities - Rewards & Recognition



A requirement of 2-2-2 Planning is to host at least one listening session in the first 30 days of the effort. At last review, over 300 sessions were held by states and at NHQ. As a result of the sessions, several FEVS or Employee Advisory Boards were created to continue listening and communicating with employees. Several states created a dedicated e-mail linked directly to their State Conservationist.

USDA Executives Meet on Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

USDA executives have been meeting to focus on employee engagement and organizational performance. In 2014, USDA moved up in the Best Places to Work rankings. We want to continue that positive trend.

In a recent meeting, speakers Margot Conrad and Nora Gardner highlighted information from a study by the Partnership for Public Service on building the leadership bench by training and developing leaders at all levels of the organization.

Speakers Secretary Thomas Vilsack, Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden, and Assistant Secretary for Administration, Dr. Gregory Parham, shared messages about continuing USDA's Cultural Transformation, improving customer service, and improving our efficiency and effectiveness.

In closing, Beth Cobert, Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget, said that engaging employees is one of the best ways to improve organizational performance.

She complimented USDA's response rate on last year's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) as one of the highest in government. She noted there is a goal to increase the employee engagement index score on this survey from 63 to 67% positive by the year 2016.

AMS Partners with the Department on FEVS

By Gregory Rosenthal, AMS

On March 12, senior leaders with the Agricultural Marketing Service's Livestock, Poultry and Seed (AMS-LPS) Program met with USDA's Early Resolution and Conciliation Division's Director Cyrus Salazar and Deputy Program Manager Edward Profit. They discussed results of the recent AMS-LPS Employee Survey—a detailed follow-up to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)—and strategies for developing an action plan. That effort, using AMS-LPS' survey analysis that highlighted strategies and existing opportunities to improve employee motivation and engagement, will lead to sustained employee workplace satisfaction.



Each AMS-LPS Division sent a copy of its specific survey results, plus the complete results, to their respective employees to solicit feedback and create Division-level action plans. Secretary Vilsack has made it a priority to ensure FEVS and other survey results are used to make the Department a better place to work. AMS-LPS is working closely with the Department to implement that vision.

(Pictured left) The Agricultural Marketing Service's Livestock, Poultry and Seed Deputy Administrator Craig Morris (left) presents a keepsake award to USDA's Early Resolution and Conciliation Division's (ERCD) Deputy Program Manager Edward Profit for the assistance he and ERCD Director Cyrus Salazar (not pictured) provided for FEVS.

Focus On Ethics

USDA's Office of Ethics is Here to Help You!

By Stuart Bender, Director, USDA Office of Ethics

As a Federal employee, you understand the importance of maintaining the American people's trust and confidence in the actions of the government. Here at USDA, the Office of Ethics is a ready resource available to help employees better understand Federal ethics rules. Throughout the year, Office of Ethics staff members conduct ethics trainings courses, both live and recorded on AgLearn. Office of Ethics staff also provide individual ethics advice so employees can proactively avoid potential conflicts of interest.



To further enhance your understanding of these rules, check this corner of the newsletter for the latest information on the ethics rules. Remember, if you have an ethics question, the Office of Ethics is here to help and is available via e-mail at DAEO.Ethics@usda.gov.

Focus on Ethics is brought to us by Stuart Bender, who serves as the Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) and Director of the Office of Ethics at USDA. In this capacity, Mr. Bender is responsible for coordinating and managing the Department's Ethics Program, serving USDA employees across the country and around the globe. Mr. Bender reports directly to USDA's General Counsel.

Mr. Bender has been a public servant for more than 25 years. Before joining USDA in 2010, Mr. Bender was the Designated Agency Ethics Official and Assistant General Counsel at the Office of Management and Budget. From 1995 to 2004, he served as the Legal Counsel and Ethics Officer for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum during its first decade. He has served as an attorney and ethics official in the Executive Office of the President and as a civilian attorney in the U.S. Navy.

Mr. Bender received his B.A. degree, *cum laude*, in Political Science from Brandeis University, and holds a J.D. degree, *cum laude*, from the George Washington University School of Law.

New Mother's Room Opens for Midwest FNS Employees

By Susan Siemietkowski, FNS

The Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) Midwest Regional Office, based in Chicago, recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to showcase the opening of a new Mother's Room for breastfeeding and expressing breast milk. Its amenities include a compact refrigerator to store expressed breast milk, nutrition education resources and a comfortable nursing chair. The event was held to coincide with National Nutrition Month and supports CT's "Recruitment and Retention" pillar.



(Upper Left) Deputy Regional Administrator for FNS, Trish Solis, cuts a ribbon and discusses the importance of breastfeeding. (Middle) The Midwest Region Nutrition Coordinating Committee gathers to celebrate their work in creating the Mother's Room. (Upper Right) SNP specialist, Maged Hanafi, enjoys some healthy snacks following the ribbon cutting.

Don't Forget Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW)

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

Celebrated the first week of May since 1985, PSRW is organized annually by the [Public Employees Roundtable](#) and its member organizations to honor the men and women who serve our nation as federal, state, county and local government employees. The theme for this year is Government Works. Thanks for the amazing things you do across our great nation, around the world, and in your hometown and community. For information about events, go to <http://publicservicerecognitionweek.org/events/>



UPCOMING USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Asian Pacific American Islander Heritage Month

Date: Thursday, May 21, 2015

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Month

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2015

Caribbean - American Heritage Month

Date: Thursday, June 18, 2015

The observances begin at 10:00 a.m. (EDT) at the Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC. Employees receive one hour of diversity training for attending USDA Special Observances.

FSA Emphasizing Employee Engagement

By Robert Haughton, FSA

Earlier this year, the Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD), part of the Farm Service Agency's Deputy Administrator for Management organization, held a one day conference to promote employee engagement. Participants took part in a three-hour training learn about personal branding and how it relates to improving organizational branding.

The second session identified areas where the division has been excelling at customer engagement and how to increase customer satisfaction. Participants brushed up on various communication styles and the importance of using different styles to more effectively interact with others. The day ended with a facilitated discussion in which leadership had an opportunity to share their engagement strategy and receive feedback from employees.

The sessions proved to further open lines of communication, increased self-awareness, and provided the director with a collaborative roadmap for increasing employee engagement.

Embracing a Healthy Lifestyle During National Nutrition Month

By Susan Siemietkowski, FNCS

To celebrate National Nutrition Month in March, many Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNCS) employees joined the FNCS Nutrition Council, the Cultural Transformation Committee and the FNCS Wellness Committee to host ***"Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle: One Step at a Time."***

The event, which occurred at Food and Nutrition headquarters in Alexandria, VA, focused on the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. Volunteers set up information booths, providing practical information and advice to help employees make healthier choices. What a great way to promote the FNCS mission!



(Left photo) Renee Arroyo-Lee Sing encourages and offers healthy and tasty smoothies to attendees.

(Right photo) Julie Lyddon provides helpful tips for eating healthfully on a budget by comparing food labels and eating fruits and vegetables that are in season.



(Bottom photo) A group of Food and Nutrition Service Registered Dietitians and Nutritionists celebrate National Nutrition Month!

Special thanks for the event's success goes to the National Nutrition Month Planning Committee (not pictured): Jinee Burd, Allison Magness, Renee Arroyo-Lee Sing, Kaushalya Heendeniya, Maya Maroto, Jan Barrett and Julie Lyddon.

Mentoring is in Demand at the Economic Research Service

By Alia Shabazz, ERS

The ERS Mentoring Program is in full swing. The Professional Development Committee (PDC) provides oversight for the program. It was originally established in 2011 and has had over 91 participants. On a recent spring day, the program had a productive orientation attended by mentors, situational mentors, mentees, supervisors, and members of the PDC. A total of 32 employees have been paired for the mentor/mentee relationship.

The program will have many activities for the pairs to participate in over the course of the next six months. Activities and workshops include mentoring action planning, Sustaining Effective Mentorship, Time Management, Thriving in the Workplace and the Publishing Process at ERS.

USDA Employees Help Fill the Utah Food Bank

By Denny Skiles (FSA)

We all take pride in the mission that FSA has to assist farmers and ranchers with gaining access to programs that support the growing of agricultural products. The Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO) has been watching this happen for decades, we have had a bird's eye view (literally). We see the plentiful bounty across America's heartland and the hard work it takes to bring it to the consuming public. The APFO creates and maintains maps that facilitate and sustain the growth of USDA programs. The APFO also assists in emergency disaster response by providing the most recent "before event" images to federal and state agencies and the private sector.



(Pictured L-R): Jerry Lohry, John Mootz, Michelle von Readen, Denny Skiles, Deb Burrigge, Michelle Clifford, Danette Danner and David Parry (not pictured, Linda Cotter)

During the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) one of the speakers brought in to address the staff were members of the "No Kid Hungry" Campaign which is sponsored through the Utah Food Bank. This program provides food to children who may not have the means to have three square meals a day while not in school. APFO found out that, in 2014, "No Kid Hungry" distributed 5,103,080 pounds of USDA commodities and 186,411 cases of food to all 29 counties in Utah. It took hundreds of volunteers to make that happen. That's when it dawned on us:

"We see the agriculture picture develop in the fields across America, why not help finish the process and contribute in getting it to the people who need it the most, America's Children!"

On April 2nd, the APFO Operations Branch stepped into the Utah Food Bank warehouse where USDA commodity shipments are stored waiting for distribution to the end users. Row upon row and stacked to the roof, the USDA Shield could be seen hundreds of times. Boxes were broke open and repackaged with veggies, meat, dairy, and pasta so that it could be distributed easily.

"Volunteering at our local food bank really educated the team on the day-to-day struggles so many Americans have with hunger" says APFO Supervisor John Mootz "and it helped identify the importance of USDA's mission of supporting and protecting the agriculture supply system."

At the end of the day we all walked away from the experience with a little better appreciation for the Country that gives us the freedoms, the Department that gives us the goods and the Community that gives us the sense of inclusion and bonds us all together.



FSA Contracting Supervisor John Mootz sorts canned food items as part of the "No Kid Hungry" campaign in Utah.

FAS Employees Put Cultural Transformation In Action Through Bike Share and Fitness Programs

By Joe Migyanka (FAS)

Phil Karsting, Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), recently announced the extension of the Bike Share and Fitness Programs suggested by employees. The FAS Bike Share Program covers the cost of the Capital Bike Share annual membership. It supports employee wellness, getting around the capital in a timely manner and, for some, going to and from work.

There are approximately 50 users so far this year. The FAS Fitness Program subsidizes up to \$20 per month for health club/gym memberships; and it encourages healthy employees, employee retention, and lower sick leave usage. Participation last year exceeded 105 employees and is expected to increase in the current year.

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to:

MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.